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EOD Company invites troops to open house

By Spc. Steven J. Schneider
Staff writer

Soldiers looking for a new challenge or who just want to explode into a new career field may want to attend the 716th Ordnance Company's Open House at 11 a.m. in the Emergency Response Center (Fire House) building 4253, Eagle Road Nov. 27.

"A lot of people think what we do is blow stuff up all the time, but what we do is mitigate hazards," said Sgt. Maj. Robert Hockstedler, 716th Ordnance Co. "We do blow stuff up when we get the chance."

The company is looking for specialists and non-promotable sergeants with less than one year time in grade for their career field, who are thinking about changing of jobs, to come check out the static displays at the open house.

The displays will feature the company's equipment which includes robots, surveillance technology, X-ray capabilities and a .50 caliber sniper rifle. Explosive Ordnance Disposal technicians will be available to answer questions.

"A (EOD) Soldier has to be someone who would do anything to help anybody else in a time of need," Hockstedler said.

EOD has high standards. Soldiers coming in the field have to have a general technical score on the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery of at least 110, and cannot be color blind or claustrophobic. There are no exceptions to those standards.

After a Soldier qualifies, more than eight months of training is necessary, and many Soldiers fail, Hockstedler said.

The difficulty and the danger of the MOS helps bring Soldiers together, Hockstedler said.

EOD spends most of its time defusing and detonating different types of explosives.

According to 716th Ordnance Co. Commander Capt. Douglas Guard, the Soldiers in EOD love what they do.

The EOD passion comes from working on such a variety of explosives and figuring a way around each independent obstacle, Guard added.



Courtesy Photo

A Soldier from the 21st Combat Support Hospital, 13th Corps Support Command, hugs her husband during the homecoming ceremony held at one of physical fitness centers on Fort Hood, Texas in March. Many look forward to the reunion after a long deployment.

Communication key to reunions

By Sgt. Ann Venturato
Assistant editor

Some Soldiers will soon be reuniting with their family members after being deployed for the past year, but with this comes the stress of reconnecting with loved ones in a process called reintegration.

"Reintegration is to bring parts and pieces into a common entity to accomplish a mission whether it be a job, a life or a marriage," said Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Al Lowe, 13th Corps Support Command.

It is important for Soldiers to remember that time has moved on and each person has to come to grips with their own pieces, Lowe said.

Family members have to heal from the separation too.

Service members need to be aware that their deployment experiences have changed them and family members have been changed by their own experiences as well.

Family members as well as Soldiers go through the reintegration process, Lowe said.

The process itself just doesn't happen overnight, it can go on for years.

"Reintegration is not just the Soldier

reintegrating back into society. It is also the society accepting that Soldier," Lowe said.

When it comes to reintegration, there are a lot of expectations and fantasies from both the Soldier and their family members.

Those expectations aren't always going to match up with reality and because of this the situation can become stressful, said Maj. William Leusink, clinical director for the 785th Medical Company (Combat Stress Control).

Soldiers and their family members can experience fear, anxiety and frustration because of the stress.

Soldiers should review their expectations and realistically assess what will probably happen.

Soldiers and spouses need to talk to each other about their expectations and fantasies.

Communication is the key to a successful reintegration.

Leusink advised Soldiers to:

- talk with their spouse
- keep things simple
- don't take on too many projects right away
- take time with your family and become reacquainted as a family

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Photo by Sgt. Ann Venturato

Col. Nicholas Zoeller, 13th COSCOM Civil Affairs officer, holds his daughter Dora during the deployment ceremony last January. He is just one of the many service members who will be going through the reintegration process upon redeployment.

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- don't drink a lot of alcoholic beverages
- only discuss those experiences you feel comfortable talking about

"Soldiers don't have to go into detail about their experiences unless they want to and even then they can go into vague detail," Leusink said.

It is important that Soldiers only face one major reintegration at a time.

"Deploying out here was stressful, however going back and finding out how things are now can also be quite stressful even if things have gone relatively well," Leusink said.

Relationships with family members will be different because of the time apart. Spouses will have become more independent.

Remember that returning home doesn't mean that everything is going to be perfect.

"There may have been some issues that have been boiling along for many months while you have been away. You may have to accept that it is going to take a while, as well as negotiations with your spouse, before this issue is going to be resolved," Leusink said.

Service members need to give themselves the time to get their minds back into a non-hostile environment.

Leusink said that it is normal for Soldiers to react to noises, drive like they are trying to avoid possible improvised explosive devices, as well as experience feelings of discomfort and distrust when in a public place.

This usually starts to go away within a week or two, Leusink added.

Many Soldiers have had some unpleasant experiences while they have been out here and retain unpleasant memories of those experiences but that doesn't mean they have post traumatic stress disorder, Leusink said.

Leusink said that Soldiers and family members should be concerned if the service member starts having frequent nightmares that disturb their sleep, recollections that interrupt the Soldier's daily life or flashback experiences.

They should also be concerned if the service member starts avoiding certain things in their daily life that they have identified as triggers, have problems sleeping or experience external responses such as jumpiness and irritability, Leusink added.

Leusink added that if these symptoms persist for long periods of time it can really affect the Soldiers quality of life.

If service members need to talk to someone, they can contact Army One Source at www.armyonesource.com. Army One Source is available for the spouse and children as well as the Soldier. Soldiers can also talk to a chaplain or a mental health provider.

Attorneys help solve Soldiers' problems

By Spc. Leah R. Burton
Staff writer

The attorneys at the Legal Assistance Office here offer many services to help all service members understand and cope with their legal issues.

The services the attorneys and paralegals offer range from drafting powers of attorney to assisting Soldiers with their creditors.

"The primary focus on [Soldiers'] minds should be the mission," said Capt. Marc Defreyn, chief of client services. "We have Soldiers going on convoy. We have Soldiers guarding the watch tower that keeps me safe at night, so we want them focused on their mission, and there's nothing more distracting to a Soldier than a legal problem that's just hanging over their heads."

POAs, family law, citizenship, military administration, estates and wills, consumer and finance issues all fall under the umbrella of legal assistance.

POAs come in two categories, general and special. The general POA is a very broad document giving someone the power to perform a myriad of actions on one's behalf. This person can access bank accounts, sell property, file a tax return, register a vehicle and much more.

A special POA is a very narrow document allowing someone to perform one specific action.

"Powers of attorney are double-edged swords. They have a very valuable purpose, but they can also do a lot of legal harm," Defreyn said. "I've had, unfortunately, some horror stories where Soldiers come in and the person that they thought they trusted is no longer one that can be trusted. They've either drained their bank account or they've purchased unnecessary things in their name."

In these cases, the legal assistance staff can revoke the POA.

"It becomes a bit more challenging, because you're trying to undo something. It's obviously better to prevent it in the first place," Defreyn said.

The family law aspect of legal assistance encompasses issues like child support, child custody and spousal support.

Bad news like an increase in child support or child custody battles only adds to the already stressful situation of being deployed.

"We have the luxury of removing the emotion from out of the problem. While [Soldiers] may be having a difficult problem with child custody, I can divorce myself from the emotional problem, focus on the legal problem and resolve it for them," Defreyn said.

The legal staff also assists Soldiers and officers rebut NCOERs, OERs, letters of reprimand, Army Regulation 15-6 investigations, reports of survey and other types of military administrative actions.

The attorneys assist Soldiers with drafting wills and some estate planning, such as creating trusts. They help Soldiers manage problems with their creditors as well.

"Most Soldiers know they have a right to have their



Photo by Spc. Leah R. Burton

Capt. Marc Defreyn, Capt. Joseph Penkala, Staff Sgt. Edward MacPherson and Sgt. Carolina Fowler work in the legal assistance office helping service members deal with their legal problems.

interest rate capped at six percent, but there's a provision in the law that most Soldiers forget that's actually very important," Defreyn said. "Your entrance into military duty has to materially affect your ability to pay the bills. For example, you are now making more money because you're deployed. You can request a six percent cap on your interest rate, but your creditor has the right to deny it, because your entrance into military duty has not materially affected your ability to pay. Actually quite the opposite, it has enhanced your ability to pay."

In addition to resolving all these issues, the attorneys can also help clients terminate automobile or apartment leases due to their current deployment. Most Soldiers have already dealt with these concerns prior to deploying, but some may have had a short deployment notice and never got the opportunity to take care of these issues, Defreyn said.

With tax season just around the corner, Soldiers may be looking to legal assistance to help them file their taxes.

"We can assist Soldiers with taxes, but unlike a garrison, we don't have the resources to have a full blown tax center. We just don't have the tools to do complex tax assistance," Defreyn said.

He suggested that the easiest thing for Soldiers to do out here is take advantage of the tax extension and file upon redeployment. Further information is on the Internal Revenue Service Web site at www.irs.gov.

A lot of service members associate the Judge Advocate General office with being in trouble, Defreyn said.

"Let us take care of your legal problems. You focus on your mission, and we'll address your legal problems," he said. "Think of us as a law firm in the middle of LSA Anaconda. You have a full-blown law firm here. We can do anything out here, within reason, that a regular law firm can do."

The Legal assistance business hours are from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Saturday. The office is in the LSA Anaconda Consolidated Legal Center in building 4113 at Pennsylvania Avenue and Hawk Boulevard.

Call DNV 529-7453 for more information.

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Defense Act increases pay, benefits

By Jim Garamone
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON — President Bush signed the \$420.6 billion National Defense Authorization Act Oct. 28.

The bill makes up 19.9 percent of the total fiscal 2005 federal budget and 3.6 percent of the gross domestic product. Last year, the percentages were 20.2 percent and 3.8 percent, respectively.

The authorization act is the second of two bills that had to become law for the Defense Department to operate. The first is the Defense Appropriations Act, which the president signed into law Aug. 5. The appropriations act provides the money; the authorization act gives DoD the OK to spend it.

The bill raises the end-strength level of the Army and Marine Corps by 20,000 and 3,000, respectively. Army end-strength will be set at 502,000; Marines, 178,000.

In addition, the bill funds a 3.5 percent across-the-board pay raise for service members and eliminates out-of-pocket expenses for housing by increasing the basic allowance for housing. The bill also makes permanent increases in hostile fire/imminent danger pay to \$225 per month and in family separation pay to \$250 per month.

The bill also allows the base realignment and closure process to move forward. The House version of the bill would have delayed the process for two years.

The bill authorizes a number of programs for reserve-component service members.

On the medical side, it provides for up to 90 days of Tricare coverage for reservists and their families who are mobilized.

It also authorizes 180 days of transitional Tricare health benefits for reservists, active-duty members and their families after separation from active duty.

In addition, members of the selected reserve earn a year's eligibility for Tricare for each 90 days of service in a contingency.

"If a Guardsman or reservist has served for at least 30 days called up on a contingency operation, then had 90 days of service," said Dr. William Winkenwerder, assistant secretary of defense for health affairs in an Oct. 29 interview, "for each 90 days of service, they're eligible for a full year of Tricare coverage if they sign up for another year of reserve service."

The bill authorizes a new reserve-component educational assistance program tied to the Montgomery GI Bill. The provision has different rates, depending on the length of active-duty service. It is 40 percent for service of 90 days to one year, 60 percent for one year to two years, and 80 percent for more than two consecutive years.

The bill also speeds up concurrent-receipt payments for retirees rated 100 percent disabled. In the past, retirees had their pay docked dollar for dollar by the amount of disability payments the Department of Veterans Affairs paid them.

Last year, Congress authorized a phase-in process that would eliminate the concurrent-receipt prohibition over a decade.

On the family- and bachelor-housing front, the bill eliminates a statutory ceiling on the privatization of housing. In the program, which allows DoD to leverage public money with private contractors, the services can build and renovate family and bachelor housing.

RED TAIL 56 COUNCIL
When: Every Wednesday
Where: Balad Town Hall
Time: 6:30 p.m.

Contact Tech Sgt. Dennis McJunkin
at dennis.mcjunkin@blab.aorcentaf.af.mil or 1059
for more information

"TIP OF THE SPEAR" IN LEADERSHIP, MENTORSHIP AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Pvt. Murphy's Law



ARMY OF ME

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Left Shoulder Diary

88th Regional Readiness Command

Compiled from
Unit History

The 88th Regional Readiness Command shoulder sleeve insignia is characterized by a blue quatrefoil, two figure eights crossing at right angles, two and one-fourth inches in height. The width of the loops is fifteen-sixteenths of an inch.

The insignia was originally authorized for the 88th Division by telegram Nov. 12, 1918. It was officially announced June 29, 1922 and amended to correct the measurement Oct. 11, 1922. It was reassigned April 16, 1996 for the 88th Regional Support Command and re-designated for the 88th Regional Readiness Command July 16, 2003.

The 88th Infantry Division was organized Aug. 25, 1917. In Aug. 1918, the division arrived in France. During World War I, the Soldiers of the "Cloverleaf Division," fought with distinction in the campaigns.

The division returned to Camp Dodge and was demobilized June 10, 1919. In 1921, it was reconstituted in the organized reserves at Minneapolis, Minn.

The 88th ID was ordered to active service at Camp Gruber, Okla., in July 1942. It went overseas in Dec. 1942 and fought in the North Apennines, Po Valley and Rome-Arno campaigns.

The division arrived at Casablanca, French Morocco, Dec. 15, 1943, and moved to Magenta, Algeria, Dec. 28, for training. After completing more combat training in Naples, Italy, an advance party went to Cassino Feb. 27, and the entire unit relieved British elements along the Garigliano River March 5.

Throughout the war, they were one of the most battle-tested units and earned the "Blue Devils" nickname from fearful Germans. The 88th ID stayed in Italy as part of the Trieste Occupation Forces.

It was inactivated at Leghorn, Italy, in October 1947.

The 88th RRC is named after this historic combat division and boasts the same patch.

The 88th Regional Support Command was established in 1996 at Fort Snelling, St. Paul, Minn., as the command and control and support headquarters for all reserve units in the six state region of the upper Midwest. The nine major subordinate commands, reserve combat support and combat service support units in Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan and Ohio all call the 88th RRC their higher headquarters.

Civilian of the Week

Phillip Alexander Morales, Morale, Welfare and Recreation Coordinator, came here from Houston to take over managing the LSA Anaconda Fitness Center.

Morales came to the post on Oct. 4, and was surprised by his own expectations.

"My first impression wasn't bad at all," he said. "I expected it to be a lot worse than I've experienced. It's not bad at all."

When Morales came here it was to support the troops, but he also saw his chance to live out a passion of his.

"I really want to travel," he said. "There's so much to see and I want to appreciate it all. I just have that wanderlust."

When his rest and relaxation leave comes up, Morales plans to spend a few days in Spain with his

mom and travel Europe.

Morales said he might be a little blinded by personal motivation.

"I really enjoy helping out the troops and meeting all types of individuals. That's what I really like the most," he said. "[Being here] is a chance to be a part of history, support the troops, and a chance to travel and see the world."

Morales is passionate about what he sees the troops doing here and is very supportive of them and their actions.

"You have to admire [military personnel], they're modern day heroes. These guys, they make a lot of sacrifices and people have to appreciate that," he said. "Despite the political beliefs and current events, [people should] keep the young men and women in mind and support them."

Morales understands the difficulties troops have here, and thinks of them despite the difficulties he faces.

"It's really difficult coordinating sporting events when I'm not a sports fan," confessed Morales. "It's kind of like teaching a fish to walk."

He looks forward to seeing his mom, and said family is something that he does miss.

"I really miss my nephews, my niece, and my grandparents," he said. "Other than that, there's not much [about home] that I miss. I was at home for 21 years, it was time for me to leave."

When it is time for Morales to leave here, he will depart a better person because of the experience, he said.

"I will [have] a little more pride in myself knowing I supported [the troops here] as well as a newfound respect for the Soldiers."



Phillip Alexander Morales

Attache openings for qualified

By Sgt. Ann Venturato
Assistant editor

If Soldiers are looking for a challenging career with new opportunities, the Army attaché program might be just the thing for them.

Attaché NCOs provide critical administrative and intelligence support to the Defense Attaché Office and at embassies by performing many of the duties normally found throughout a brigade or division staff section, according to a memo written by Sgt. 1st Class Daniel R. Vidis, Army Enlisted Assignment Manager and Recruiter for the Defense Attaché System. The memo stated duties vary by location and size of the office, but also include non-traditional functions such as supporting presidential or congressional visits and coordination with host-nation military and government officials.

Army attaché NCOs currently serve in more than 100 countries. Attaché service is an active duty program with only individual mobilization augmentee positions available for Reserve Soldiers.

Applications from deployed Soldiers can be accepted and certain modifications to the required documentation, such as a photograph, can be coordinated by emailing Vidis at defenderv@hotmail.com prior to application submission.

In most cases the application cannot be processed until the Soldier returns to home station or has a redeployment date confirmed by the chain of command.

The complete list of prerequisites and the application procedures are detailed in (Army Regulation 611-60), Assignment to Army Attaché Duty. Some of the most important requirements include eligibility for a top secret security clearance, and the service member has no non-U.S. Citizen family members.

Interested Soldiers should have an outstanding service record, with special emphasis given to those service members who have successfully served in other demanding duty assignments such as drill sergeant, recruiter, or first sergeant.

Soldiers who do not meet the general technical and clerical requirements or have not taken and passed the defense language aptitude bat-

tery are not disqualified, but they are less competitive for selection. Service members need to have a GT score of 115 and a CL score of 120. Applicants must pass a typing test certifying they are able to type 40 words per minute. Soldiers in the ranks of specialist to master sergeant are encouraged to apply, although assignment possibilities are very limited for specialists.

Becoming an attaché is an excellent opportunity for soldiers who wish to become warrant officers. According to the letter, last year the selection rate was 80 percent and the two soldiers that were not selected were expected to be picked up as a warrant officer on their second look.

Soldiers can send an e-mail or call Vidis at DSN 622-2134, extension 2633, for an information packet about the requirements and procedures to apply for attaché duty.

Applications cannot be processed unless the Soldier is released by their branch. If the service member's branch manager indicates that a release is not possible for one reason or another, then a release is not likely to happen.

see PROGRAM, page 13

Russ Lee brings spirit of music to troops

By Sgt. Ann Venturato
Assistant editor

Contemporary Christian artist, Russ Lee, gave a concert for service members here at the Sustainer Indoor Theater Nov. 7 as part of an eight-day tour that also took him to Baghdad and Mosul.

"It was a great concert. It exceeded my expectations. It was very motivating. It lifted my spirits and I know it did the same thing for everyone here," said Sgt. 1st Class Wade Ford, a supply and service NCOIC for 172nd Corps Support Group.

Lee thought this would be a great opportunity to come over here to shake some hands and to hang out and to let the Soldiers know that there is a whole bunch of people back home who are still thankful and who will continue to support them and pray for them.

This isn't Lee's first visit to Iraq, last November he sang for troops in Mosul and Tal Afar.

"It was an awesome experience for me. I loved it. I loved being with the Soldiers and the chaplains. It was just a great experience and it was a great opportunity for me just to come and say 'thank you,'" Lee said about his previous trip to Iraq.

Lee enjoys taking the time out of his schedule to share his music with service members.

"Anywhere the door of opportunity

opens up and my schedule allows it. I like to be available. Especially during these times, these are important times to do what we can," Lee said. "There are a lot of things I can't do, but there are certainly things that I can do. I like to focus on the things I can do," Lee said. "One of the things that I can do is pick up a guitar and sing some songs to Soldiers."

Lee described himself as a soulful pop singer and has been singing professionally for more than 15 years.

He sang songs such as "You Can't Keep a Good Man Down" and "If You Could See Me Now." He had service members on their feet when he finished his show with "I'm Going to Live What I Believe."

Spending time with the Soldiers was the reason Lee decided to come to Iraq.

"I just want to come and be available and serve Soldiers. That is really why we came here," Lee said. "Because for me this really is not at all a public relations trip or a USO tour, there are no lights or great media coverage."

Lee said he wanted to come so he could pass along their holiday greetings to folks back home during Lee's Christmas tour.

"I want people to remember the Soldiers and to remember to pray for the Soldiers and to remember their families because there are so many Soldiers who are separated from the families during the holidays," Lee said.



Photos by Sgt. Ann Venturato

Contemporary Christian singer Russ Lee sings and plays guitar for service members during his concert at the Sustainer Indoor Theater Nov. 7. He sang songs such as "You Can't Keep a Good Man Down" and "If You Could See Me Now."



Service members react to Lee's singing during the concert.



Lee said that service members have their weapons for battle and he considers his guitar to be his weapon. His motto is "have guitar, will travel."

Medics provide relief for Afghan refugees

By Staff Sgt. Phillip Witzke
Army News Service

KABUL, Afghanistan — Huddled in the ramshackle of what is left of a once prominent hillside community; children peered through the closed gates at the Soldiers as they dismounted their vehicles. Rivulets of liquid coursed down the hillside, pooling in small puddles on the road that ran along the base of the community; the smell of raw sewage assaulted the Soldiers' nostrils.

But relief would soon be on the way, as Soldiers from the Kabul Compound Medical Clinic arrived Oct. 27 to bring what relief they could to the residents of Sia Sang Kaita Now refugee camp on the outskirts of the Afghan capital.

As the medics unloaded supplies and set up a mobile clinic in a small courtyard and adjoining brick and mud dwelling, word began to spread that the Americans had come to bring medical aid to the camp. Soon, a small crowd began to gather.

Small children, parents with infants, and women lined the walls outside the courtyard, each one waiting for a chance to see a medical professional, many for the first time.

Although the medics weren't able to treat everyone within their two-hour time limit, they managed to provide services to about 85 women and children on common illnesses such as cold and flu, cuts, and aches and

pains.

Bringing medical aid to these refugee families is a mission that was born out of necessity.

First, there is no medical Provincial Reconstruction Team in the Kabul area because of the variety of hospitals and free medical clinics. The closest PRT is in the Parwan Province, well north of the capital city. And secondly, the refugees are not considered part of the civilian populous in the Afghan culture, which further isolated this group of nomads.

"Most of these people have never seen hospitals or doctors," said Spc. Timothy Laynor, a medic from the 25th Infantry Division (Light) assigned to Kabul Compound. "This is my eighth mission and the third refugee camp I have been in. "This was a brand new camp and we could tell that they had probably never seen a medical provider. But they were very open to it. They know why the Soldiers are here: to help them. So, they would automatically just go right to us."

Laynor said the most common ailments the team saw were dysentery, ringworm, diarrhea and stomach problems, which can be associated with an unclean living environment.

To help minimize such infections, the children were taught how to wash their hands and faces, especially before eating, and posters were hung to remind adults to wash before preparing food. It is a simple solution to a bigger problem, but one that with



Photo by Staff Sgt. Phillip Witzke

Spc. Timothy Laynor helps treat a child Oct. 27 at the Sia Sang Kaita Now refugee camp. Many of the children were immunized to help prevent infection from common diseases that are contracted from poor water supplies and lack of proper hygiene in the camp.

training can help the community stay healthier.

"Education is really the key to this," said Dr. (Col.) Michael Young, the medical doctor for Kabul Compound Medical Clinic. "They can learn they need to wash their hands before they prepare food and they need to possibly boil their water until they have a safe water source."

Another preventive measure is to immunize the children against parasites and provide the children and women with vitamins and iron. It is a small measure to help the nutritional

needs of this community as the residents try to exist on what little food they can get and a water supply that is often tainted with any number of bacterial and disease.

"We try to give the children anti-parasite medicines," Young said, "but they are going to get re-infected. That is more a symptom of the lack of infrastructure and the hygiene, no sewers and not boiling water."

Even with education and some medical attention, there is still more to be done. Many of the residents didn't get to see a medi-

cal professional and in some cases the medics just didn't have the right medication for them.

There remains a desperate need for things like common cough and cold medications, children's pain and fever reducer, cortisone creams or other topical anti-biotic creams and anti-fungal creams, Laynor said.

Despite the hurdles that must be overcome, the Kabul Compound Medical Team will be out in the community, striving to provide whatever care and relief they can to the people in the Kabul area who need it.

First Stryker Brigade returns from Iraq deployment

By J. C. Matthews
Army News Service

FORT LEWIS, Wash. — For a couple of thousand Fort Lewis families, the wait is over.

And, for the remaining family and friends awaiting the return of 3rd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division, the end is in sight.

As the one-year anniversary of its deployment drew closer, the Arrowhead Brigade continued its mission-ending flow from Iraq to Fort Lewis this week, with about 3,000 members now home.

The Army's first Stryker Brigade Combat Team started its deployment Nov. 8, 2003, and served in northern Iraq as part of Task Force Olympia, headquartered in Mosul.

The Lancers of 1st Brigade, 25th Infantry Division recently deployed to Iraq to take over the Stryker Brigade's mission in the task force.

As the mission handover continued, planeloads of 3rd

Brigade Soldiers arrived on an almost daily basis all week, with welcoming ceremonies held at Sheridan Gymnasium. First Lt. Nick Kardonsky of Company C, 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry, returned Oct. 23 and was part of a group on hand at the gym Nov. 1 to greet more arriving members of his company. He said the fellowship among members of the unit helped make the deployment memorable.

"The thing I'd remember most is the fun we had with our friends and comrades, the missions we executed well, the missions that went flawlessly — those are the things I'll remember most," Kardonsky said.

"I think it's harder on wives to be back here, because they have more time to think about us being gone," he added. "They come home to an empty house, but I'm surrounded by my comrades and my buddies all day long. You live in your job."

The brigade's deputy commander, Lt. Col. Kevin Hyneman, called the support of families and friends back home "a heroic effort." Hyneman, who returned Oct. 11, spoke briefly to the crowd at the welcome home cer-

emony Nov. 1, and reminded the returning soldiers of their place in history.

"You were part of a significant operation to bring freedom to a country that hasn't tasted it — ever," he said. "The success that they're going to have in a couple of years is a direct result of your efforts and your bravery."

Some of the families gathered at the gym said that, as the time for their soldiers' return grew closer, they became more anxious.

"The longer he was over there, the more nervous I got," said Pat Arthur, who traveled from Marion, Ohio, to see her son return Nov. 1.

"I was driving myself crazy," said Amelia Selph, whose husband Spc. Daniel Selph of Company A, 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry, returned Nov. 1. "I must have cleaned the house a million times."

Other spouses, veterans of previous deployments, took it in stride.

"I've been married eight years, and I've had him home every other year," said Virginia Garcia, whose husband returned Monday. "Still I feel awesome — I'm excited."

US, Iraqi forces drive terrorists from Fallujah

By Jim Garamone
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON — Iraqi and U.S. forces began their long-awaited assault Nov. 8 against insurgents in Fallujah, Iraq, in an operation dubbed “Al Fajr,” the Iraqi word for dawn.

According to various news reports, thousands of soldiers and Marines had moved into Fallujah neighborhoods believed to be harboring the most insurgents. Earlier, Iraqi troops took two bridges and a hospital in northern Fallujah, Multi-National Force Iraq officials said today. Officials described the situation around the militant stronghold as “fluid.”

Interim Iraqi Prime Minister Ayad Allawi gave the go-ahead for Iraqi and U.S. forces to rid the city of rebels and foreign terrorists. In a news conference in Baghdad, Allawi said his government is determined to drive the terrorists out of Fallujah. He said he made this move after all peaceful means to solve the problem had not worked out.

“I have given my authority to the Iraqi forces to spearhead the attacks,” Allawi said.

On Nov. 7, the prime minister declared a state of emergency in all of Iraq except for the northern Kurdish-controlled area.

The Iraqi 36th Commando Battalion took the bridges and hospital and detained 38 men.

Marine artillery and U.S. aircraft hit terrorist hideouts in the city. Pentagon officials said Marines and Soldiers in the area observed secondary explosions after the strikes. This often signifies that ammunition or explosives were at the site that was struck, officials explained.

News reports indicated U.S. Marines and Soldiers fired mortars and artillery at concentrations of militants and terrorists.

The offensive in Fallujah was one of the most telegraphed military operations in history. The city normally has a population of about 300,000. With all the warnings, officials estimated that between 50,000 and 60,000 people were left in the city. Even so, Multi-National Force Iraq officials reported terrorists in the city were preventing families from leaving Fallujah. According to residents, terrorists planned to use citizens as human shields, then claim they were attacked by friendly forces.

Multi-National Force Iraq officials received reports that terrorists in Fallujah were building a system of tunnels joining mosques and schools within the city. The tunnels reportedly would be used to transport weapons and ammunition throughout protected sites in the face of the Multi-National Force assault.



Photo by Gunnery Sgt. Chago Zapata

First Lt. Christopher M. Smith, a Cerritos, Calif., native and platoon commander, 1st Platoon, Company A, Battalion Landing Team 1st Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable), hands out toys to a group of young orphans at the Aleskan Orphan House for Children in Ad Diwaniyah, Iraq, Nov. 3.

Marines bring toys, smiles to orphanage

By Gunnery Sgt. Chago Zapata
11th Marine Expeditionary Unit

AD DIWANIYAH, Iraq — The orphanage was large and orderly, about 10 tidily-made beds filled several rooms. Although it smelled slightly of mold and a leaky pipe dripped a constant steady beat on the floor of the bathroom, everything was neat and organized.

In a large room filled with children from the Aleskan Orphan House for Children, Marines from Company A, Battalion Landing Team 1st Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable), and soldiers from the 404th Battalion, 50th Iraqi National Guard Brigade, handed out hundreds of toys and school supplies to more than 50 children Nov. 3.

“We can’t give them a lot of things here but we can give them kindness and a home. The kind Americans have given them toys to make them smile,” said Thamer Najah Al Mhana, manager of the orphanage.

According to Capt. Robert B. Sotire, company commander, Co. A, BLT 1/4, 11th MEU (SOC), one of his platoon commanders, 1st Lt. Christopher M. Smith, a Cerritos, Calif., native and platoon commander for 1st Platoon, started the ball rolling on the toy giveaway mission.

“When (Smith) went out in a civil affairs patrol, he noticed a need for supplies for the children of the orphanage and other schools in the area,” said Sotire. “He took the initiative from there.”

Smith sent a request to the people in Cerritos calling for donations of toys and school supplies so the Marines could distribute the items to needy children in Diwaniyah.

“I originally contacted several people back in California, one of whom was an old school teacher of mine who is now the mayor of Cerritos,” Smith said. “After that, the snowball effect took control and through friends and family, e-mails and the Internet, word spread pretty quickly. That’s why things have been so successful.”

According to Smith, members of the Cerritos city council played a big part in getting all the toys here. They organized the drive and, along with people from four other states, donated more than 60 boxes of school supplies and toys equaling more than \$15,000. About 40 people, organizations, various schools and the Cerritos city government contributed to the toy drive.

“It started off small and it turned out pretty big,” Smith said. “It’s surprising to see how many people back home will jump at the opportunity to do their part to help out when you ask them.”

Smith said this mission also afforded junior Marines of the unit a chance to be able to shift gears and do the humanitarian assistance aspect of the Marine Corps and help out people in the community.

“It was nice to be able to hand out toys to the kids. It makes you feel like you’re doing something worthwhile out here other than combat, which is all we did in Najaf,” said Lance Cpl. Joseph N.

Richardson, M249 Squad Automatic Weapon gunner, 2nd Fireteam, 2nd Squad, 5th Platoon, Co. A, BLT 1/4, 11th MEU (SOC). “It’s good to do something on the other side of things.”

According to Richardson, the Iraqi children and the orphanage staff were very appreciative.

“There wasn’t a thing in that orphanage. I didn’t see anything in there other than tables, chairs and beds,” Richardson said. “You could definitely tell that we brightened their day.”

Along with helping out the children of the orphanage, Co. A Marines took the toy giveaway mission as an opportunity to teach a lesson to the Iraqi National Guard soldiers.

“What we did today had two functions,” said Sotire, “To help the Iraqi children by giving them some toys and to teach (the ING) civil affairs and public relations.”

According to Sotire, training with the ING never ends. They are integrated into everything the Marines do, and thus everything becomes a training evolution.

“Any time that we can spend training with (the ING), whether it is cleaning weapons, firing on the range, doing a combat patrol or a raid, or giving out toys to orphans, they’re learning something,” Sotire explained.

Sotire wanted to make sure the ING soldiers handed out toys to the children personally so they could experience the feeling of generosity. He also wanted to teach them that being a soldier is not only about fighting.



Photo by Sgt. Ann Venturato

Staff Sgt. Ann Marie Owen, 332nd Expeditionary Medical Group, admires a stuffed bear as she places toys into different containers for Iraqi children at a school near LSA Anaconda. Owens was one of about 30 service members who helped sort toys and books for the children.



Photo by Sgt. Ann Venturato

Staff Sgt. Donna Jones, 332nd Expeditionary Logistics Readiness Squadron, begins filling a plastic bag with books for donation to Iraqi children at schools surrounding LSA Anaconda. Jones was one of the many volunteers to help fill plastic bags for Operation Iraqi Children.



Photo by Tech Sgt. Robert Jensen

Airman from the 332nd Air Expeditionary Wing volunteer to organize school supplies and toys for delivery to a local Iraqi school.

SOLDIERS, AIRMEN

Working together to build a better tomorrow

By Sgt. Ann Venturato
Assistant editor

About 50 Soldiers and Airmen assisted the 13th Corps Support Command Civil Affairs office sort and package toys and supplies for Iraqi children in preparation for humanitarian missions.

The school distributions are part of Operation Iraqi Children, said Sgt. Jason Aragon, 13th COSCOM civil affairs NCO. Donations through Operation Iraqi Children shows people that we are here to help the Iraqi people, Aragon said.

Aragon said the Civil Affairs office was receiving an average of six to 10 boxes of school supplies a day back around May, but now that has slowed down to about six boxes a week.

"Before the Air Force came, we had boxes and boxes of stuff that had to be prepared and packed for distribution," Aragon said. "Now we only have pencils, pens and paper that hasn't been packed and those are extra supplies we give out at the schools."

In the two days of sorting the supplies, the service members put together more than 500 schoolbags.

"I didn't expect that amount of people to show up from the Air Force," Aragon said.

Chaplain (Capt.) Quentin Collins, with the 332nd Air Expeditionary Wing, put the word out asking for volunteers to sort the toys and supplies.

"I was expecting maybe 20 people, but this is absolutely great," Collins said as he looked around at all the service members busily working to fill the bags.

The Air Force couldn't send anyone off post on the distribution missions because of security restrictions, but the joint effort would remedy their obligation to take care of their sponsored schools.

"We get an average of four or five boxes a week from families and people overseas that want to do something," Collins said.

Like people back home, all the service members wanted to do their part to help.

"I have three kids, and this just sounded like a great idea," said Capt. Dianne Stroble, 332nd Expeditionary Medical Group, "I thought that this would be something that might bring joy to the kids, who obviously don't have a lot."

The service members gave a little bit of their time to help a cause.



Lacking other means to transport the supplies, Soldiers and Airmen packed toys and books into plastic bags for delivery to a local school.



Photo by Tech Sgt. Robert Jensen

Airman 1st Class Leanne Williams and Master Sgt. Susan Piasecki from the 332nd Expeditionary Communications Squadron bundle toys and school supplies into individual packs for delivery to a local Iraqi school.

Movie Schedule

Sustainer Reel Time Theater

Daily Shows: 3 p.m., 6 p.m., and 9 p.m.
(schedule is subject to change)

Nov. 12	
3 p.m.	Cinderella
7 p.m.	Napoleon
9 p.m.	Day After Tomorrow
Nov. 13	
3 p.m.	Dirty Dancing Havana Nights
6 p.m.	Envy
9 p.m.	50 First Dates
Nov. 14	
3 p.m.	Ladder 49
6 p.m.	First Daughter
9 p.m.	Napoleon
Nov. 15	
3 p.m.	50 First Dates
6 p.m.	Godsend
9 p.m.	Ladder 49
Nov. 16	
3 p.m.	Gothika
6 p.m.	Gothika
9 p.m.	Napoleon
Nov. 17	
3 p.m.	Cellular
6 p.m.	Cellular
9 p.m.	Wimbledon
Nov. 18	
3 p.m.	Laws of Attraction
6 p.m.	Wimbledon
9 p.m.	Cellular



Wimbledon



Godsend

Weekly Religious Schedule

Roman Catholic Mass

Saturday 7 p.m. Eden Chapel (bldg. 4148)
Sunday 8:30 a.m. 185th Task Force Tent
Sunday 10:30 a.m. Tuskegee Chapel
Sunday 11 a.m. Anaconda Provider Chapel
Monday 9 a.m. PPI Dining Facility
Monday 9 p.m. PPI Dining Facility
Friday 6:30 p.m. Air Force Hospital Chapel
Sacrament of Reconciliation
Friday 6 p.m. Air Force Hospital Chapel

Church of Christ

Sunday 11 a.m. 1/142nd Chapel Tent

Christian Orthodox

Saturday 7 p.m. 185th Task Force Tent
Sunday 11 a.m. 185th Task Force Tent

Protestant-Gospel

Sunday 11 a.m. Sustainer Indoor Theater
Sunday 7 p.m. Eden Chapel (bldg. 4148)

Lutheran

Sunday 8:30 a.m. Cherokee Chapel (bldg. 4002)
Sunday 2 p.m. 185th Task Force Tent

Protestant-Contemporary

Sunday 7 a.m. Sustainer Indoor Theater
Sunday 9 a.m. Tuskegee Chapel

Protestant-Traditional

Sunday 9 a.m. Eden Chapel (bldg. 4148)
Sunday 9:30 a.m. Anaconda Provider Chapel
Sunday 10:30 a.m. Air Force Hospital Chapel
Sunday 11 a.m. Eden Chapel (bldg. 4148)
Sunday 11 a.m. 185th Aviation Group Chapel

Protestant-Praise and Worship

Sunday 9:30 a.m. Sustainer Indoor Theater
Sunday 9:30 a.m. 185th Task Force Tent
Sunday 5:30 p.m. Tuskegee Chapel

Islamic Prayer

Friday 1:30 p.m. Anaconda Provider Chapel

Latter Day Saints

Sunday 1 p.m. Anaconda Provider Chapel
Sunday 7 p.m. Tuskegee Chapel

Jewish Prayer

Friday 6:30 p.m. Eden Chapel (bldg. 4148)

Movie Synopsis for Nov. 14 – 20

Wimbledon

PG-13, Comedy, 97 min
Kirsten Dunst, Sam Neill, Paul Bettany

Peter Colt is an unlucky guy, scoring “love” both professionally and personally. Seeded near the bottom of the world tennis ranks, he manages to score a wild card, allowing him to play in the prestigious Wimbledon tournament. There, he meets and falls in love with American tennis star Lizzie Bradbury.

Fueled by a mixture of his newfound luck, love and on-court prowess, Peter works his way up the ranks of the tournament players and actually stands a chance of fulfilling his lifelong dream of winning the men’s singles title – that’s if his luck can just hold out.

Godsend

PG-13, Science Fiction, 102 min
Rebecca Romijn-Stamos, Robert De Niro

Paul and Jessie Duncan (Greg Kinnear, Rebecca Romijn-Stamos) have lost their beloved 8-year-old son Adam (Cameron Bright) in a tragic accident. As they are arranging for his burial, Dr. Richard Wells, (Robert De Niro) approaches with the incredible offer to clone Adam, essentially bringing back their boy and reuniting their broken family.

Despite the many legal, ethical and moral issues raised by the offer, the grieving couple accept Wells’ proposal, placing them in a sort of Faustian pact with the doctor. But to the Duncans, the secrecy Wells demands is insignificant compared to the hope that their son will again have the chance to grow up.

The couple moves to the small town of Riverton, home of Wells - impressive Godsend Fertility Clinic, where the stem cells carrying Adam’s DNA are implanted in Jessie’s womb and where Adam will be born and raised — for the second time.

Cellular

PG-13, Thriller, 92 min
Kim Basinger, Chris Evan, Eric Christian Olsen

A random wrong number on his cell phone sends a young man into a high-stakes race against time to save a woman’s life. With no knowledge of Jessica Martin (Kim Basinger) other than her hushed, panicked voice on the other end of the tenuous cell phone connection, Ryan (Chris Evans) is quickly thrown into a world of deception and murder on his frantic search to find and save her. Jessica’s life is in his hands, but what is waiting for him on the other side of the line, and what will it cost him to find out?

Co-starring Jason Statham (“The Italian Job”) and William H. Macy (“Fargo”).

The film is directed by David Ellis (Final Destination II) from a screenplay by J. Mackye Gruber and Eric Bress (The Butterfly Effect), and Larry Cohen (Phone Booth).

Gothika

R, Horror, 96 min
Halle Berry, Robert Downey, Jr., Penelope Cruz

Brilliant criminal psychologist Dr. Miranda Grey awakens to find herself a patient in her own mental institution and with no memory of a murder that she apparently committed three days prior. Miranda’s husband was brutally murdered, all the evidence points directly at her, and the only memory she has of the night, is of a mysterious encounter with a strange young girl. As Miranda’s behavior becomes increasingly erratic, her claims of innocence are seen by her friends, colleagues and former patients as the beginnings of a descent into madness. Miranda soon realizes that she has become the pawn of a vengeful spirit, and with time running out she must determine if she is being led farther from her sanity, or closer to the truth.

Celebrating National American Indian Heritage Month

Tones of home still ring loud for mechanic



By Pfc. Abel Trevino
Staff writer

Spc. Bert W. James looks like every Soldier here: dust covered tan desert camouflage uniform, sharp eyes and a calm demeanor. Beneath the surface, there's something that stands out, something very unique and distinctive.

James is Native American, full-blooded Navajo, and carries his culture with pride.

James, a mechanic with the 29th Signal Battalion, spoke softly, calmly, about his childhood and growing up on a reservation in Arizona. He joked about his hair – he has a natural blond widow's peak – and spoke about his family and about war. He talked briefly about his grandfathers and an uncle influencing him when he decided to join the Army. Most importantly, James spoke about his heritage.

"[Back home] the elderly still believe in the old ways," James said.

When James talks about the old ways of home in Kayenta, Ariz. – in the middle of a reservation – he refers to the traditional Navajo lifestyle. He said that some of the elders still live without running water and electricity in mud huts. For the people James grew up with, life had changed and pop culture had infused itself enough to allow him to grow up no differently than American children in every suburb across the country.

"I could go out and scrape my knees and get in trouble like every other red-blooded American kid. I could always turn to reading," James said. "I did pretty much what every child did."

James said he basically grew up at his grandmother's house and she was the one who taught him his Navajo culture.

"My grandmother was a huge influence," James said. "She was a firm believer in education and through her I learned the language; a lot of the teachings. She shared

them with me."

James still retains his childhood knowledge and is fluent in Navajo.

For James, his heritage and military service go hand in hand; since World War I, one of his family members has always volunteered to go and "fight for our country," he said.

"Some of the things that influenced me to be in the military were two of my grandfathers. [They] were code talkers in World War II," he said.

Another one of James grandfathers was a prisoner of war in Korea.

James joked that he joined the Army instead of the Marines because the recruiting station was closer, but was serious about the influence his uncle had on his decision when selecting an occupation.

"My uncle told me, when I was joining the Army, that when I go, I had better learn something useful. I went back to the recruiter and told him I wanted to be a mechanic," James said.

James' uncle influenced him on picking a military career, but James joined for his own private reasons.

"[I joined] mostly for my own experience," James said. "Really, to change environments a little bit."

Despite the change of environment, James carries his heritage with him.

"When I joined the Army, my dad gave me this (a small leather pouch filled with ground white corn). When I went home on leave, my dad gave me (a smaller leather pouch). It has a stone bear inside, with ground white corn," he said. "I wouldn't exactly call them good luck charms, they're more like [for] protection."

Family is an important part of his heritage. It is the bond that keeps them together, James said. He is single and without children, but plans on passing along his heritage to his children.

"A lot of times, it's good to carry on the teachings and educate others," he said. "It's really a way of life."

James has strong convictions about his culture and heritage, but doesn't consider himself a role model.

"I'm only a positive influence for people back home," he said.

James tries to influence the children of his hometown positively, as when he was younger, there was a positive influence imprinted into him by a U.S. government teacher who taught him the Navajo word *hojo*, pronounced ho-JO.

"It means balance, spirit and harmony. I used to always think about that, one word being so old but having so much meaning," James said. "You can't take a person for granted, you can't take Mother Nature for granted. That one word summarizes so much."

A powerful word describes this man, his heritage and proud culture: Navajo.



Photos by Pfc. Abel Trevino

Spc. Bert W. James, a mechanic with 29th Signal Battalion, is a full-blooded Navajo from Kayenta, Ariz. James grew up on a reservation and joined the military, following in the footsteps of his family. Two of his grandfathers were code talkers in World War II and another one was a prisoner of war in Korea. Since World War I, a member of James' family has been in war.



James' primary specialty is humvee maintenance, although he is capable of working on most military vehicles.

Upgrading for improvement on property book system

By Spc. Amanda Labrum
81st BCT Public Affairs

Fifteen 81st Brigade Combat Team Soldiers participated in a 40-hour class on Property Book Unit Supply-Enhanced provided by the Army Logistics Assistance Team here.

Two civilian contractors, who have worked together for the past 10 months in Iraq and in the United States, taught the PBUS-E class.

"Training must come first before you can accomplish the mission," said Sgt. 1st Class Geronimo Lorenzo, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 81st BCT.

PBUS-E is a live, Web-based system that allows higher levels of the unit and the chain of command to have visibility of a company's hand receipts or equipment by serial number.

"The instructors are very knowledgeable," said Sgt. 1st Class William Norris, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 181st Support Battalion. "It is a very thorough class, very easy to understand."

PBUS-E is currently replacing the Standard Army Property Book Supply-Revised system throughout the Army.

"It is built off the old systems, so it's familiar to users of the old system," said

Jim Urban, instructor for software capabilities.

Experienced users noted enhancements on the new system.

"Once it (PBUS-E) is implemented, it will make things a lot easier. It combines the best parts of the old system," Norris said.

The technical aspects of PBUS-E provide more advantages.

"This system allows visibility at the highest level, from the company on up. There is better accountability of equipment," said Joe Mitchell, who teaches the technical portion of the class.

The PBUS-E system makes the job

straightforward for supply sergeants.

"It will make it easier to get reports. We can have visuals on hand receipts. The system is more user-friendly because it's Windows-based," said Staff Sgt. Hailyn Bluff, 181st Spt. Bn.

Soldiers complimented the program.

"There is a lot of emphasis on hand receipts and managing equipment. It's better this way," said Lorenzo.

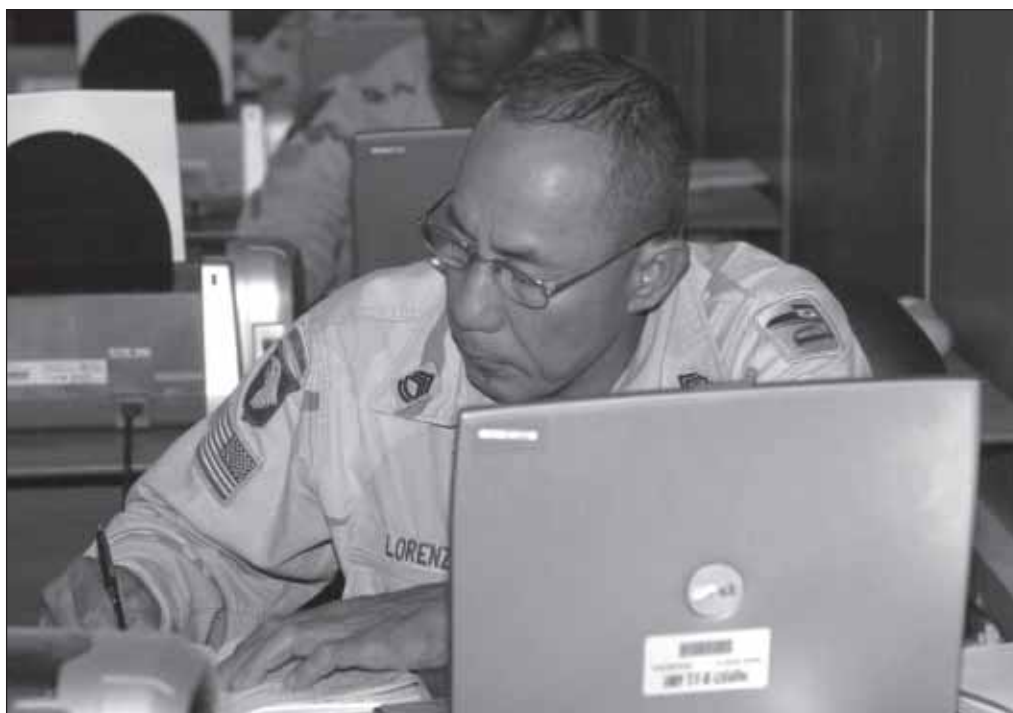
The ALAT hosts a variety of logistics systems-based training. Qualified personnel are on hand for training. Contact Lt. Col. Don Moses at DNVF 529-8309 for more information.

Capt. Patrick Cobb, the assistant contracting officer representative, has been working at the ALAT for the past nine months, bringing in trailers for classrooms and getting everything up and running.

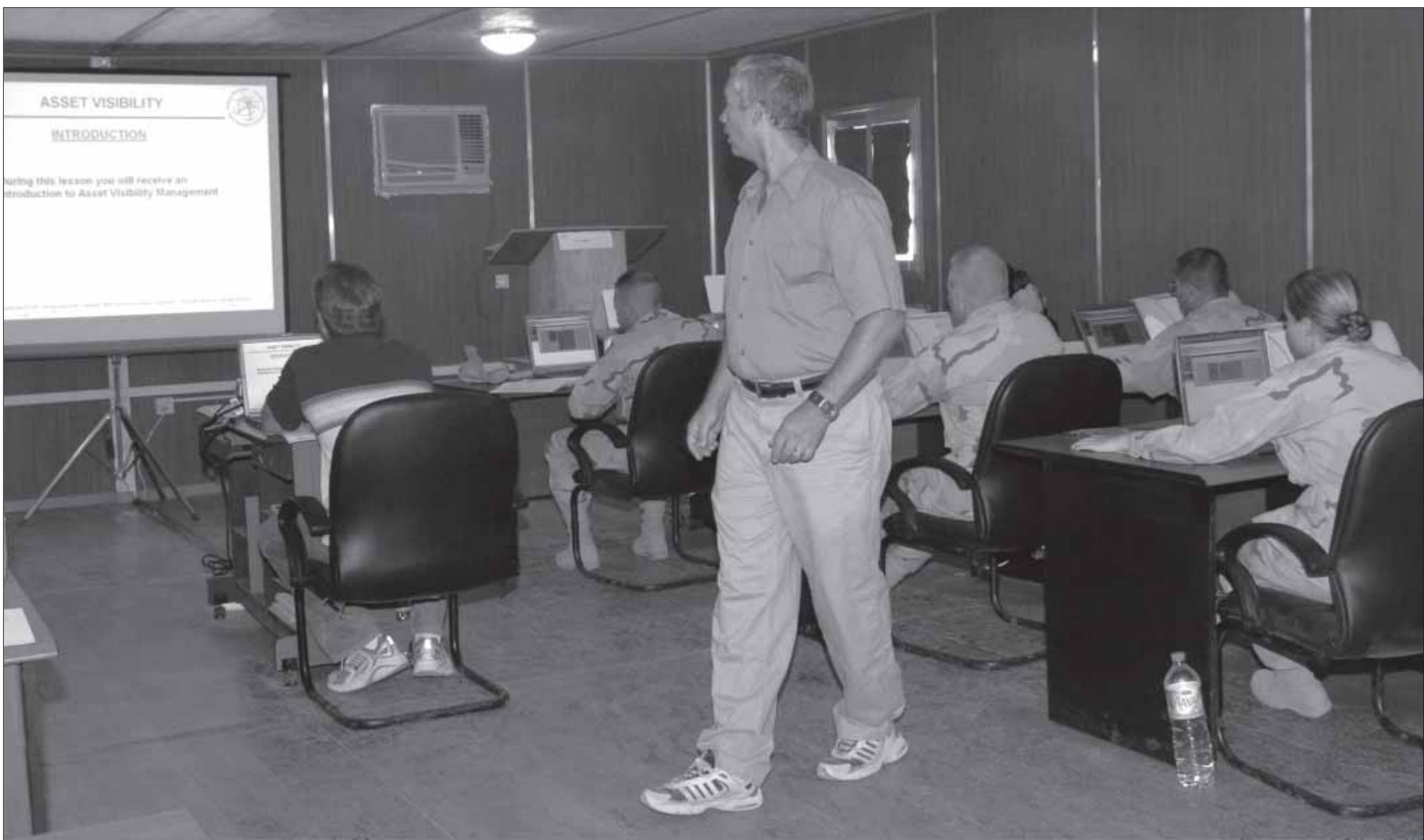
With 13 contractors, all subject matter experts, the staff is prepared to tailor training to meet the needs of its clients for the Standard Army Management Information Systems.

"We understand logistics and focus on training. We provide help for the units that are in Iraq. Every Friday we graduate between 10 and 16 students. We are here for the customer," said Cobb.

The ALAT is outside the education center, building 4250 in seven trailers.



Sgt. 1st Class Geronimo Lorenzo, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 81st Brigade Combat Team takes notes for operating the PBUS-E system.



Students receive instruction on the Property Book Unit Supply-Enhanced system at the Army Logistics Assistance Team buildings on LSA Anaconda.

Photos by Spc. Amanda Labrum

Guard, Reserve job protection rights upheld

By Donna Miles
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON — There's good news for federal employees who have filed claims that their bosses denied them job rights because of their National Guard or reserve service, an attorney with the National Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve told the American Forces Press Service.

Sam Wright, also a captain in the Naval Reserve, said a new special counsel who took office last January is helping speed along backlogged claims and ensuring that federal employers who violate the law are held accountable.

Wright said Special Counsel Scott J. Bloch is helping ensure the Uniformed

Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act, commonly referred to as USERRA, is effectively enforced.

The law, which has been in effect for the past 10 years, prohibits employers from discriminating against their workers because of their military service. Congress passed the law to safeguard the employment rights and benefits of service members upon their return to civilian life.

USERRA applies to the federal, state and local governments and to private employers, regardless of size. Employees who believe their employers have violated their rights under USERRA file a complaint with the Department of Labor's Veterans' Employment and Training Service, Wright explained in an article in this month's "The Officer," a

publication of the Reserve Officers Association.

If a Department of Labor investigation concludes that the case has merit and the employer is a federal agency, the Labor Department refers the case to the Office of Special Counsel, Wright explained. The special counsel heads this small federal agency.

A General Accountability Office report issued last month criticized the speed in which the Office of Special Counsel moved forward on USERRA complaints.

But Wright said the report covered the agency's operations before Bloch took the reins, ushering in a sea of change in the way the complaints are handled.

"Referring a USERRA case to OSC is no longer a useless formality," Wright

wrote.

So far this year, the Office of Special Counsel has processed "about a dozen" USERRA cases, some of which had been backlogged as long as two years, according to spokeswoman Cathy Deeds.

Deeds said all but one of the cases resulted in settlement. One, a complaint filed against the U.S. Postal Service, was referred to the Merit Systems Protection Board for further action.

Wright said this new momentum represents a positive step in protecting Guard and reserve members' job rights.

The Office of Special Counsel's new emphasis on USERRA enforcement "helps ensure that the federal government stands as a model employer in its treatment of National Guard and reserve employees," Wright said.

PROGRAM from page 4

Once the packet is completed it will be placed on a standing list with other applicants, in order of competitiveness based on overall qualifications. A more qualified Soldier will place higher in priority over a lesser qualified applicant regardless of submission dates. A packet will be evaluated for up to six months from the date it was considered complete. At that point, the non-select packet will be returned with an explanation of the factors that contributed to nonselection.

If a Soldier is already on assignment instructions, they will normally be required to comply with those orders and submit their packet at the appropriate time following arrival at their next duty station.

If a service member desires to work with their branch manager to request deletion from assignment instructions, that is a Soldiers prerogative. The attaché application does not automatically initiate any deletion action.



Courtesy photo

Chief Warrant Officer Karen Hansen, Defense Attaché Office and Col. Michael R. Martinez, U.S. Embassy's Defense Attaché for Belgrade, donate a 10 kilowatt-hour generator with trailer to Mrs. Lynne Montgomery, Dragan Arsic, the Director of Studenica Health Center and Mirko Komatina, Donor Coordinator, Municipality of Kraljevo.

Question of the Week

What do you do to stay in shape?



Staff Sgt. Michael Thompson
732nd Expeditionary
Civil Engineer Squadron

"To stay in shape I've been working out at the west side gym, lifting weights and riding the bike for about 45 minutes."



Spc. James Estes
29th Signal Battalion

"Right now, we're not doing physical training because of the gear, but I go to the pool and do laps."



Sgt. Gloria DeGuzman
118th Medical Battalion

"I go swimming, go to the gym, lift weights, run and do the treadmill."



Spc. Lindsay Richards
226th Medical Logistics Battalion

"I go to the gym. I run a lot and do weightlifting."



Staff Sgt. T'sha Floyd
299th Forward Support Battalion

"You walk everywhere you go."

MWR Complex Schedule

Dominos

Come to the MWR tent for an exciting domino tournament today and Friday, 8 a.m., 2 p.m. and 8 p.m.

Pool

8-ball tournaments will be held at 8 a.m., 2 p.m. and 8 p.m. Tuesday. 9-ball tournaments will be held 8 a.m., 2 p.m. and 8 p.m. Thursday.

Spades

Spades tournaments are scheduled for 2 p.m. and 8 p.m. today.

Table Tennis

Table Tennis tournaments will be held 8 a.m., 2 p.m. and 8 p.m. Wednesday.

Music

The MWR Sports Lounge features different types of music each night Monday through Saturday 8 p.m. to midnight.

Mondays -- Jazz and old school

Tuesdays -- Rock

Wednesdays -- Country

Thursdays -- Tejano and Hispanic

Fridays -- R&B

Saturdays -- Salsa and Latino

LSA Anaconda Fitness Center

Judo

The LSA Anaconda Fitness Center offers Judo classes at 8:30 p.m. today, Monday, Wednesday and Saturday.

Aerobics

There will be an aerobics class Monday through Saturday at 6 p.m. every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday.

Karate

Karate classes will be held Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 8 a.m.

Volleyball tournament

Come check out the volleyball tournament Nov. 15, 17 and 19.

Basketball

The LSA Anaconda Fitness Center will host basketball league play tonight, Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, 6 to 9 p.m.

Capoeira

Would you like to dance, do martial arts and work out at the same time?

If so, come to Capoeira at the LSA Anaconda Fitness Center Wednesday 7:15 p.m. or Sunday and Thursday, 6 p.m.

8-Ball Tournament

Just Show up and prove you're the best at LSA Anaconda.

When: Tuesday, 8 a.m., 2 p.m. and 8 p.m.

Where: MWR



Enjoy some country

If you like to dance and you like to dance country, join other fans of Country music Wednesday nights, 8 p.m. to midnight at the MWR Lounge. Don't forget to bring your dancing shoes.



EOD OPEN HOUSE

Come check out explosive ordnance equipment, talk to EOD techs. and find out what it takes to be EOD. They're looking for specialists and sergeants, who might want to change to a challenging new job.



When: Nov. 27 at 11 a.m.

Where: The Explosive Ordnance Center (Fire House) building 4253 Eagle Road

Deekins pinned by Lockdown in final game

By Pfc. Abel Trevino
Staff writer

The 29th Signal Battalion Deekins lost 17-8 to the 4th Corps Materiel Management Center Lockdowns in the fall league championship softball game Nov. 7, but no one had a better time losing than they did.

"Bring it in, this one can't hit," yelled one of the Deekins from the sideline as his own teammate stepped up to bat.

"There's no strategy [to our game],"

said Patrick O' Bryan, Deekins' coach. "We go out there and hit the ball."

And hitting was part of the problem.

In the first inning, the Deekins didn't hit. They did, however allow the Lockdowns to hit.

The Lockdowns went into the game as the underdogs; the Deekins had a better record and were considered the home team. Nonetheless, Lockdown's Leonardo Torres, left fielder, demonstrated the pace his team was going to play at when he came out of the gate and hit a double.

At the end of the first inning,

Lockdown was up 6-0.

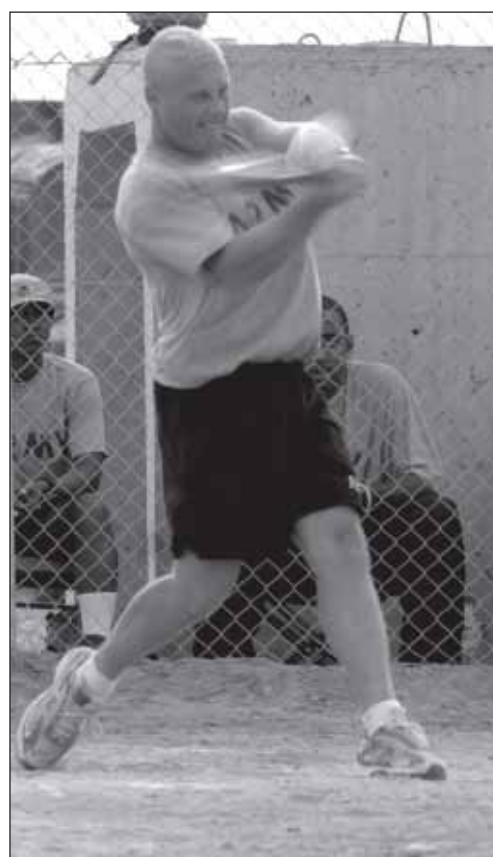
The Deekins took to the game in good humor, frequently heckling themselves from the sideline, while the Lockdown played a serious game, tinged with a bit of revenge.

"We played against the [Deekins] earlier in the season and we got defeated by them," said Edwin Rivera, Lockdown coach and third baseman.



Photos by Pfc. Abel Trevino

Deekins pitcher Patrick Bilon ignores a runner on first late during the 6th inning of the Fall League championship game. In the 7th inning, the Deekins gave up eight runs and the game.



Robert Barta, 1st baseman for the Lockdowns, slugs the ball early in the 1st inning and brings in two runners.

Rivera said his team's strategy relied on just getting base hits and trying to keep a man on third base to bring home.

But after Lockdown dominated the first inning, the game took a turn and the Deekins looked like they were going to make a comeback.

Until the bottom of the seventh inning, the Deekins only gave up three runs.

Top of the third, Deekins showed a powerful start to a comeback with four consecutive RBIs. Then they followed it up with catastrophic failure: three consecutive outs.

The teams managed to hold each other in the middle innings, giving up a run here and there, but in the bottom of the seventh the Lockdowns exploded.

Torres, who set the pace for the game from the first hit, started another trend: he was the first of eight runs to come in.

When the dust settled on the field, Lockdown had won 17-8 by keeping to their strategy.

"We did pretty good," Rivera said. "We kept the ball on the ground and we got the base hits."

Keeping to their good humor, the Deekins joked about their loss.

"I told you we suck!" yelled one player from the dugout.

"We just come out here to have fun," said Patrick Bilon, Deekins' pitcher. "We came out here to play a little ball and take advantage of the chance to play on Anaconda."

The Lockdowns won the overall championship trophy and their own Torres was named the game's most valuable player.

Chitown's Finest display fine use of three-pointers

By Spc. Steven J. Schneider
Staff writer

A barrage of three-pointers sunk the 4th Corps Materiel Management Center Lockdown in their 55-50 loss to 3625th Maintenance Company Chitown's Finest here Nov. 4.

Lockdown (5-3) were down by many points as their offense only scored once in the first seven minutes of play. The score was 10-2 Chitown's Finest when Lockdown was able to storm back with an 11-5 run to end the first quarter and make it a game.

"We got to box them out and get more boards," said small forward Robert Robinson, Lockdown, about his team's play early.

Chitown's Finest (6-0) got away from what they do best – shoot the three-pointers – but extended their lead to eight a few minutes into the second quarter.

"We're playing good team ball," said point guard Eric L. Henderson, Chitown's Finest. "We played together. We look to play down low and then pass it outside for the hot three (point shot)."

But the Lockdown's players were making comebacks a habit and used their superior size to keep it close and went into halftime only down 26-23.

"We got the big men," Robinson said. "We got the size. We just have to exploit it."

That's exactly what they did. Passing the ball down low and creating perimeter shots allowed Lockdown to take their first lead 28-26 early in the second half. The third quarter was seesaw battle that ended 38 all.

Two three pointers at the start of the fourth quarter gave Chitown's Finest a six point lead.

"We just try to get open and shoot it when we're open," said Chitown's Finest shooting guard Omar Lewis, who led all scorers with 22 points. "We try to get positive shots."

Lockdown pulled even at 44 with just over five minutes to play.

That's when Henderson got hot and took matters into his own hands, making two quick threes and putting Chitown's Finest up by six.

"As a leader, I had to show my team I could carry them," said Henderson, who scored 18.

This time, Lockdown didn't have what it takes for a comeback as Henderson added four more and Chitown's Finest went up 55-44 with under a minute left.

The Lockdown players didn't give up, adding two three-point field goals in the closing seconds, but this time, it was too little, too late.

The difference in the game was the 10 three-point shots Chitown's Finest made.

"More or less, when we're hot from the outside, we can pretty much play with anybody," said Chitown's Finest coach Robert Stratton.

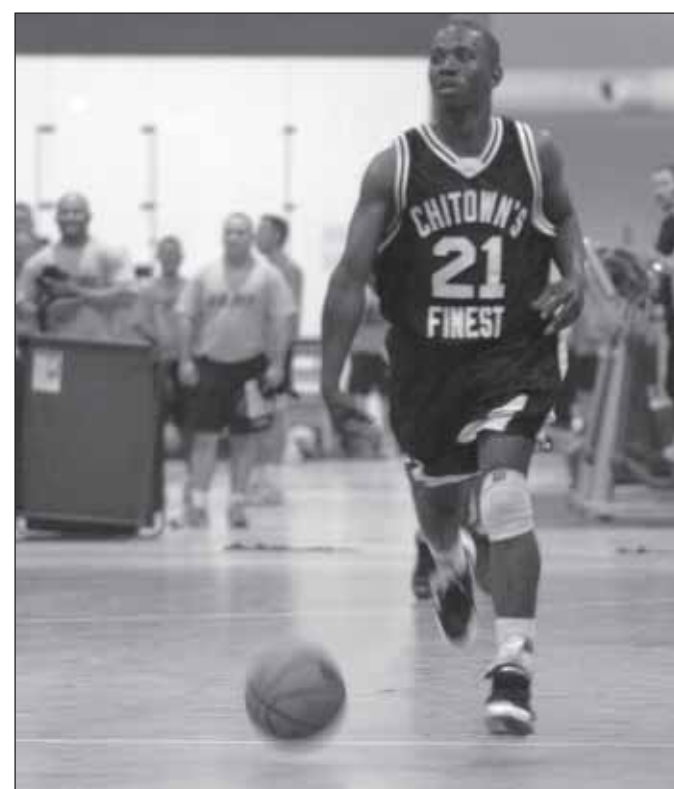


Photo by Staff Sgt. David E. Gillespie

Chitown's Finest point guard Eric L. Henderson brings the ball up the floor during his team's 55-50 win over Lockdown Nov. 4. Chitown's Finest moved to 6-0 with the victory.

Combat Comics keep 'em in stitches

By Spc. Leah R. Burton
Staff writer

Five comedians served up a gracious helping of laughter to more than 800 service members at the Sustainer Indoor Theater here Nov. 5.

Jeff Peters, Stephen Austin, Lee Levine, Steve Mazan and Kenny Kane, known as the Combat Comics, took part in a month-long tour starting in Kyrgyzstan and ending at Camp Doha, Kuwait.

The crew performed two shows for the purpose of boosting the morale of the service members and civilians serving here, Mazan said.

"They were received really well. Every comedian that comes here packs the theater. Everyone enjoys comedians," said Capt. Richard Strong, Morale, Welfare and Recreation event coordinator, 13th Corps Support Command.

Each show was about two hours long, kept the service members laughing and gave them a small slice of normalcy.

"It was absolutely a riot, just what this place needed," said Doug Parsons, a civilian working with EOD Technology. "Being in country has been monotonous. This was a great change of pace."

Upon first setting foot on Iraqi soil, the crew was surprised by their first impression.

"The first thing we saw was this gorgeous sunset," Austin said. "It was hard to associate all this misery that we hear about on the news with this beautiful sunset."

The comedians had different comedic styles and used different tactics to identify with the service members.

"I was kind of afraid that the troops would not respect me, because I've never been in the military or anything like that. Then I thought, well, now, wait a minute. I've worn a uniform before. I was in the Cub Scouts," Peters said.



Photos by Spc. Leah R. Burton

Jeff Peters, part of the Combat Comics tour that encompasses parts of Afghanistan, Kuwait, Qatar and Iraq, plays a humorous medley for more than 800 service members at LSA Anaconda's Sustainer Indoor Theater Nov. 5.

Mazan said that in every location to which the crew traveled, the best way to find out what was going on there was to read the Port-A-John walls. It's all there, he said.

The comedians normally get their material from paying attention to life, watching people and turning what they see into humor.

"We got stranded in the airport, and we didn't have food for a while, so [our escorts] were like, 'Have some MREs.' Turns out that stands for major rectal emergency," Levine said.

After traveling in C-130 Hercules aircraft, UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters and Humvees, the crew members, unanimously, have a greater apprecia-

tion and understanding of what service members do on deployment.

"It's personalized this whole chapter in U.S. history. Until now, it's been a bunch of CNN soundbites," Austin said.

It meant a lot to them to hear Soldiers say that they hadn't laughed that hard since getting here and that there's not been a whole lot to laugh at, Peters said.

"It's nice to play for such an appreciative group of people who are just glad to see you," Levine said.

After the final stop in Kuwait, the members of the crew will return to Los Angeles, Calif.

"It's going to be such a weird experience to go back home and do a nightclub performance after this," Austin said.



Lee Levine jokes about his weakness for glazed donuts.



Stephen Austin performs a standup routine for community members here.



Service members laugh as the Combat Comics perform their various routines.